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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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*(Delivered at a General Meeting of the Society on 21 May 1952)*

I OBSERVE that almost all the most impressive addresses given of late to this Society have begun with an apology. They come from highly qualified philosophers, like Professors Broad and Price, who can analyse the implications of the evidence, or at least of the current interpretations of it; or from long and exact students of the history of the S.P.R., like Mr and Mrs Salter; or from experts who have observed or conducted long series of scientifically controlled experiments. How much more humbly must a complete non-expert like me make his apologies, when attempting to discuss the whole field of Psychical Research, and in part to explain the one corner of it in which he has had some personal experience.

On his last visit to Oxford William James once said to me, in a discussion about the future of religious belief, that he thought it would be largely affected by the result of the researches of this Society. The statement made me reflect. If we take religion in a narrow doctrinal sense, there has certainly been a great liberalizing and internationalizing movement. The Pope has lately been addressing a collection of twenty-four thousand boys and girls, some Protestant and some Catholic. On committees at Geneva or Lake Success, Moslems, Jews, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists have worked together for various beneficent purposes without feeling any call to address each other as Unbelieving Dogs. But I do not think this Society played any part in that great change. If, however, we take "religion" in a very wide sense, as meaning what has been called the "inherited conglomerate" of beliefs, habits, expectations, approvals and disapprovals dominant in a given society at a given time, I think one's judgement would be rather different. There have been during the last two or three generations in England some large and surprising changes of outlook, in some of which I should judge that the S.P.R. has played a rather interesting part. We must not exaggerate. There is much truth in Andrew Bradley's statement that the supposed Victorian family is the greatest work of creative imagination that the twentieth century has produced. Nor must we forget that the "inherited conglomerate" is always to some degree in a flux, varying from old to young, from generation to generation, and of course varying widely in the same generation between the educated and uneducated. Still the

changes of the last seventy or eighty years have been rather exceptionally marked.

Of course, the political, social and economic problems have greatly changed. But I doubt if Psychological Research has had any great effect on them. In science itself the advances have been almost revolutionary, especially, I suppose, in physics. I was brought up to believe that the types of certain truth were Euclid's theorems and Newton's law of gravitation. Einstein showed them both to be inadequate and in a sense unreal. What was one to believe after that? I was brought up to believe that the Earth was gradually cooling and that, like the Moon, she would become too cold to support life. Then, on the contrary, I learned that she would become intolerably hot; and later, that neither view was true, she would explode. I was told that the sun was a fixed star. Not at all; the whole universe was receding at enormous speed; that it was expanding; that it was coming into existence; and lastly, when the layman's mind was already reeling, that space itself was curved—whatever that might mean. The orthodox conglomerate was wonderfully open-minded and ready to welcome new ideas, except indeed just in the region that interests us most. There it was decidedly intolerant, would stand no nonsense. It would not listen. A belief in hypnosis, for instance, now a well-ascertained fact, was beyond the pale. The fact that various strange phenomena, which we now explain as hypnotic, were handed down in the popular tradition, told against them rather than for them to the scientific convention of the day. They seemed to be only old superstitions revived. The Viennese physician Mesmer, whose hypnotic cures had spread his fame all over Europe, was treated as a charlatan, examined in a hostile spirit and finally discredited. A generation later Elliotson, Professor of Medicine at London University, was ordered by the authorities to discontinue his hypnotic experiments, whereupon he resigned his chair. About the same time Esdaile, a surgeon in the Indian Service, performed some three hundred operations under hypnotic anaesthesia, but medical journals refused to publish his reports. In 1842 W. S. Ward in London amputated a thigh with the patient under "mesmeric trance", and reported the case to the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. The Society heard, but refused to listen; the patient was accused of being an imposter, and the record of any such paper having been read was struck from the minutes of the Society. It was not until nearly a hundred years after Mesmer's chief cases, when Charcot took up hypnosis at the Salpêtrière, that hypnosis gained full credence and was accepted as a branch of medical practice.<sup>1</sup> A very similar history of intolerance could be told of faith-healing, telepathy, and various other phenomena. A great part of the whole science of psychology has developed from the systematic observation of phenomena which would have been scornfully set aside a hundred years ago as superstitions unworthy of attention.

Do not let us be unjust to this sceptical or negative attitude. We must not forget how close Europe still was to very cruel and revolting superstitions. England itself was comparatively safe. The statute prescribing the burning of witches had been repealed in 1738, though Ruth Osborn

<sup>1</sup> I have quoted the above almost verbally from M. Polanyi's *The Logic of Liberty* (Routledge, 1951).

was ducked as a witch and then murdered by a mob in Hertfordshire, close to London, in 1751. But in Ireland, in my own lifetime, a child, who was for some reason reputed to be a changeling, was beaten and burned with irons, the mother being locked out of the room while the invading fairy was exorcised, though unfortunately the child died in the process. A witch was burned in a village near Monte Cassino, so I am told by a friend who lived there, in 1912 or 1913. I knew an Englishman who somehow lost his memory in Italy, and was found some days after tied up in a market-place as a madman and beaten to drive out the evil spirit. In northern Greece a friend of mine found a madman tied up in a public place for anyone passing to beat as he chose. Such possibilities were near enough to have left behind them a real horror. So no wonder the men of science felt that the great need of the time was not to search sympathetically for such elements in old beliefs as might be really true, but firmly to reject the whole mass of degrading and inhuman nonsense.

None the less this excessively sceptical attitude provoked some reaction. There really are more things in the world than the science of any period can fully account for. One can see the feeling of this in many leading nineteenth-century thinkers, such as Carlyle and Ruskin, and even in J. S. Mill himself. And, of course, a much grosser kind of superstition makes a lasting appeal to human nature. The preacher who cries in Carlyle's words, "Come unto me ye who hunger and thirst to be bamboozled", will always find a response. Among the remote and uneducated, particularly perhaps among the Celtic fringes, there was generally a survival, or sometimes a passionate resurgence, of unauthorised supernatural beliefs.

Much of the boldest and most uncritical offensive, however, came from America. The fact is patent, and I think one can see the explanation. In that great democracy the common man, however unqualified, has pretty full freedom of speech. The aristocratic tradition in England and Europe generally makes the uneducated rather timid about asserting their own ideas in public against those of the experts. The actual founder of American spiritualism is said to have been Andrew Jackson Davis of Poughkeepsie, who was thrown into genuine trances and expounded a mystical doctrine of spirit communion, called Harmonial Philosophy, in several large volumes.<sup>1</sup> But Spiritualism as a vigorous popular movement seems to have started chiefly from the Fox sisters. The two younger produced communications from the spirits by means of raps, and also various poltergeist phenomena. Both, it seems, were remarkably attractive young women, while the mother and eldest sister were experts in salesmanship. They had astonishing success both in America and in England, where so great a scientist as Sir William Crookes was convinced by them. Their father, however, had been a drunkard, and the girls eventually took after him. Kate wrote and withdrew confessions proclaiming that the phenomena were all a fraud—excepting, curiously enough, the actual raps, which were in some sense genuine. Margaret confirmed the confession, and the whole business ended in singular squalor. One cannot but suspect that if the arts of observation and detection had been better developed in the middle of the last century, many of the wonder-workers of the time

<sup>1</sup> F. Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. I, p. 158

such as the Foxes, Florence Cook and even the great D. D. Home himself would, like Mme Blavatsky, have had more interrupted careers.

Certainly a disproportionate number of mediums and thaumaturges and founders of new religions were American. Not many European countries can produce figures like Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, the founders of Mormonism, or Mrs Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, or even Dr Buchman, not to speak of Amy Macpherson and hundreds of persons of equally vulnerable pretensions. One popular preacher in Chicago who used to send me literature discovered that he was the prophet Elijah reincarnate, and in order to convince possible doubters, took to wearing large wings. One could quote such extravagances by the dozen. But one strange development which could not, I think, have occurred except in America was the history of the New Motor which was to save mankind. A man with an enthusiastic faith in machinery, though no great knowledge of its working, felt it to be obvious that Salvation, like everything else, could be much more effectively produced by machine power than by human labour. Mesmeric, or as we should say hypnotic, influences were then called "animal magnetism", and, since the earth was a great magnet, there was obviously a tremendous store of mesmeric force there ready to be tapped. By the guidance of a series of dreams this man succeeded in building a motor which was to concentrate in itself the magnetic force of the earth and so manufacture Salvation on a world-wide scale. With the help of subscriptions it was made and set up, but somehow would not work. Various expedients were tried. The Faithful gathered round it in prayer, but in vain. Presently a leading spiritualist was called in to advise. He decided that the dreams were genuine and came from the spirit world; but that any engineer would see that the machine could not move without breaking itself, and perhaps the spirits had wished to try or merely to tease the inventor. Meantime, however, a woman in the south, several hundred miles away, had it revealed to her that what the machine wanted was a mother, and that she was called upon to assume that sublime office. She came to see the inventor, who reports with obvious good faith: "I did not quite understand what she wanted, but I gave her the key of the shed." But even when mothered it would not move. At last someone suggested that it was in much too high a position. It was not near enough to the magnetic centre of the earth. So some hundred or so of the Faithful harnessed themselves to it and dragged it over miles of farmland to the bottom of a river valley. There, no doubt, it might have performed better, but the ignorant farmers of the neighbourhood broke it up and threw it into the river. The story is told in detail in Mr Podmore's book, *The New Motor*. Fashions change, but the interest in the supernatural continues. A book published in 1946 reports that there were then twenty-five thousand practising astrologers in the United States.

We must not forget the English newspapers which employ a regular astrologer, nor yet the temporary vogue among more intellectual circles of Mme Blavatsky and her brand of theosophists. My point is to illustrate the great mass of utterly unacceptable material which lay before the scientists of the mid-nineteenth century. First there was a vast respectable tradition of miracles and wonders, much of it supported by religious

doctrine ; next, a large but indefinite remnant of primitive superstition among the uneducated ; thirdly, the constantly recurring interest, I had almost said the craving, among educated and uneducated alike, to discover, or hope to have discovered, some certainty behind the veil. It is also worth remembering that, overwhelmingly strong as the tradition is of the existence of prophets and *shamans* with superhuman powers, it is always accompanied by a suspicion of possible fraud or false pretensions. And the same suspicion accompanies the modern evidence. Mrs Salter records that in her childhood she saw something of the famous medium Eusapia Palladino, and though she did not attend any of the actual séances, remembers that in unprofessional moments Eusapia cheated at every game she played.

We can understand the indignant phrase of my old colleague Lord Kelvin, that all the phenomena were "half fraud and half bad observation", as well as the wiser conclusion of Professor Sidgwick that, in the face of such a bewildering mass of remarkable and ill-attested phenomena, it was "a sheer scandal" that they should be left with no serious attempt to find out what parts of them, if any, were true. That, of course, was the purpose with which this Society was founded, and the quest on which it has been engaged for over seventy years.

What have we actually discovered? It is hard to say. Hypnosis is now accepted as a *vera causa* in medical science. Much akin to hypnosis are various forms of psychotherapy recognised and practised in hospitals. Going a step further, I think we are bound to admit the fact of actual faith-healing. The evidence from Lourdes and other Christian shrines is very strong, and is confirmed by similar or even more abundant evidence from Hindu shrines ; nor should we forget the successes of Christian Science. The actual limits of faith-healing must be left for medical science to determine. The fact of immediate relief is certain ; wounded men in great pain calling for morphia have fallen peacefully asleep on receiving an injection of pure water. Continuous relief in chronic cases seems certain, and by the relief of anxiety and a consequent lessening of the flow of blood to the affected part, has sometimes been hard to distinguish from actual cure. I have known one case of this in my own family. We need not therefore be quite as puzzled as the seventeenth century Dean of Wells in Aubrey's *Miscellanies*, who writes : "the curing of the King's evil by the touch of the King doeth puzzle my philosophie ; for, whether they were of the house of York or of Lancaster, it did." Similarly, when Freud released many patients from dangerous repressions by getting them to remember some forgotten incident of their childhood, in some cases it turned out that the incident had never really taken place. It was just imaginary. But the cure worked. Then, again, every anthropologist will remind us that Faith can kill as well as cure ; there are well-proven cases from New Zealand and the Pacific Islands of people who have died because they believed they had been touched by a magician or highly tabu chief. My brother in Papua saw a man give another a handful of pebbles. "What are these?" said the man. "They are sent specially to you by so-and-so," was the answer, mentioning the name of a well-known sorcerer. "Oh, then I am done for," said the victim, and died that night.

Of all the problems that faced the S.P.R. on its foundation, the first and greatest, I suppose, was the problem so confidently answered by the Spiritualists: do we in some sense survive our bodily death, and is there communication between the living and the spirits of the dead? The subject is too large and important to be treated in passing. We may note Mrs Sidgwick's conclusion, reached after considerable study, that the evidence of survival did not amount to proof, but was enough to justify personal belief.

Members of the Society will remember the two attempts that were made to obtain a wide Census of Hallucinations: it came out in both that roughly ten to eleven per cent. of those questioned had had hallucinations, and of the hallucinations about ten per cent. appeared to be veridical. A striking attempt was made by Mr Podmore to show that all such phantasms were phantasms of the living, not of the dead. This would apply to one striking case of which I had some knowledge, and which is in one point very remarkable. The phantasm of an intimate friend of mine appeared early one morning on September 3rd or 4th 1898, to a lady he knew in London. She felt, as usual in such cases, no particular surprise, and reported that he was smiling and said, "I am going on on the 11th." It was just after the Battle of Omdurman. My friend survived the battle, but was killed the day after. The phrase "on the 11th" had no ascertainable meaning; what he really did was to "go on *with* the 11th", that is, the 11th Lancers, a regiment to which he did not belong. Must he not really have said, "I am going on *with* the 11th", and been mis-heard? If so, it would seem to follow that the phantom was not merely a creation of the percipient's mind, but was carrying a real message. It is, of course, extremely difficult in many cases like these to prove either a positive or a negative. But my own impression is that most of the commonly reported wonders, both traditional and new-fangled, have so often been proved to be either misreported or misobserved or sometimes simply fraudulent, that they must be regarded, to say the least of it, with extreme suspicion; I would include in this category spirit photographs, haunted houses, extensions of the human body and the great majority of poltergeists.

A new standard of strictly scientific observation of these supernormal phenomena is evidently a great desideratum. And for one class of them such a standard has been successfully set by Dr Soal in his statistically controlled experiments with Mr Shackleton and Mrs Gloria Stewart, and on a greater and more elaborate scale by Prof. Rhine and his staff at the Duke University, North Carolina, where there is a special Institute of Parapsychology with fifteen rooms and a staff of six to eight whole-time parapsychologists.<sup>1</sup> I cannot criticise the work of the Institute, except to say that the good faith of the workers seems undoubted, and the accuracy of the methods well attested, yet the statistical results reported are—to me at least—quite incredible. In the field of Precognition especially there are parts as to which I find myself belonging to the class described by Dr Soal as "hopelessly prejudiced by some outmoded philosophy which they probably imbibed in their youth and which they are too old to abandon". I have always held, in accord with all my scientific friends,

<sup>1</sup> See the description by Dr West in the *Journal*, XXXV, Pt. 656, Jan.-Feb. 1950.

and with that admittedly dangerous guide, Common Sense, that the cause which produces an effect must come before the effect; the cause precedes, the effect follows. I know, of course, that Time is called a Fourth Dimension; and I fully recognise that the exact placing of any event requires three dimensions in space and one in time. But surely there is nothing magical in that. It is not the sort of fourth dimension which would enable us, for instance, to see and touch the inside of a solid. I quite see that our whole conception of events in the universe must be conditioned by the limitations imposed on our minds by our bodily structure; that the whole world would be exceedingly different to us if we could really

“ know, hear and say

What this tumultuous body now denies,  
Feel, who have put our groping hands away,  
And see, no longer blinded by our eyes.”

What repels me is the supposition that sometimes, some few of these limited minds should, for no ascertainable reason, completely overcome the limitations of human reason in one small point, while leaving all others unchanged. If I go with Alice into a Looking-glass world I shall expect to find that left is right, that people cry because they are going to be hurt, and pick themselves up because they are going to fall down. But I should at least expect some consistency. I look for some other explanation. I may add that I have read Mr Dunne's book twice in the hope of being convinced, but have not been. I think that the reasoners who do magic with a fourth dimension are like those who draw conclusions about the real world from the use of surds in mathematical formulae. I am, of course, ready to accept mathematical calculations which make use of the square root of  $-1$ , or the convention that  $A$  to the power of  $0$  equals unity, but I do not believe that the convention is more than a convention or that I shall ever meet the square root of  $-1$  in real life. Consequently I feel enormous difficulty in accepting some of the statistical phenomena of precognition which, I confess, I am unable to explain otherwise. My old-fashioned mind notes with much comfort that Dr Soal himself feels doubts about precognition by pure clairvoyance with no help from telepathy.

What we are told is that in Prof. Rhine's experiments the percipient, while trying to guess the card that is dealt, happens, to a significant degree of frequency, to hit by mistake not that card but another card which has not been dealt, but is going to be dealt a few seconds later, which he is not trying to guess, and which is at the time not known to the dealer or any other human being. It is possibly made a little more plausible when we find that the guesses which do not hit their real mark are chiefly apt to hit the card next before or next after. This seems like normal shooting, a few shots hitting the bull, but more going just to the right or just to the left, but it would still involve some, to me, incredible hypotheses. I look hopefully towards the metaphysicians, such as Professors Broad and Price, to reveal some explanation which does not involve one of two incredible hypotheses: one that a man's naming of a card in an erroneous guess at another card should make a card of the sort named in another room make its way unobserved out of a pack and get itself dealt; the other, that the dealing of a card at a later time should cause a right guess

to have been made some time earlier. To Dr Soal it would make all the difference if at the later time the dealer should see the card ; then it would at least not be the dead material card itself that caused the guess to have been made, it would be the thought which the dealer did not have at the time but was presently going to have which had influenced the mind of the guesser. Both views accept the conclusion which I find unacceptable, that an effect can precede its cause. I cannot feel much comforted by the explanation that the difference in time is only a matter of seconds and might be covered by that enduring moment which we commonly call "now" or "the present". However, I know I may be wrong.

I feel on different grounds a similar incredulity about Dr Rhine's startling cases of telekinesis. Considering the vast experience of the human race in tossing dice and coins and the extreme interest which millions of gamblers have taken for hundreds of years in the way they fall, if human thought or will could really compel a die or a coin to fall in the position the agent wishes, I think we should have heard much more about it by now. Here, again, I note with relief that Dr Soal, too, is sceptical about telekinesis, and "sees no sign of a genuine physical medium on the horizon".

As to telepathy, however, I cannot maintain this healthy scepticism. There are three numbers of the *Proceedings* which would confound me if I did. They contain accounts and criticisms of my own experiences as a percipient ; my Presidential Address in 1915, Mrs Verrall's "Report of a series of experiments in Guessing" (1916), and Mrs Sidgwick's "Report on Further Experiments in Thought Transference" in 1924. I have also several bundles of records of later sessions, though of late years, owing partly to the complete dispersal of my children and the rest of our old group, I have given up the experiments.

Let me say at once that my experiments belong to the pre-statistical stage of psychical research, when the experiments were treated almost as a parlour game. Still I do not see how there can have been any significant failure of control ; nor did Mrs Verrall or Mrs Sidgwick. The conditions which suited me best were in many ways much the same as those which professional mediums have sometimes insisted upon. This is suspicious, yet fraud, I think, is out of the question ; however slippery the behaviour of my sub-conscious, too many respectable people would have had to be its accomplices. I liked the general atmosphere to be friendly and familiar ; any feeling of ill-temper or hostility was apt to spoil an experiment. Noises or interruption had a bad effect. One question that arose was the degree to which the telepathy made use of real sights, sounds, smells, memories, to reach its goal. The general conclusion was curious. It seemed that I, or my sub-conscious, showed some anxiety to explain away the telepathy by seizing upon some such excuse. It said it had guessed Savonarola making the women burn their precious possessions because it smelt a coal which had fallen out of the fire ; that it had guessed Sir A. Zimmern riding on a beach in Greece because it said it had heard a horse on the road—when the rest of the company heard no horse. Memories, again, sometimes helped it, but more often hindered it in its search. At one time, indeed, I was inclined to attribute the whole thing to subconscious auditory hyperaesthesia. I got almost no successes if the subject was not



spoken, but only written down. Two or three successes and at least one error could be explained by my having heard or mis-heard a proper name, e.g. by confusing Judge Davies and the prophet David. But, apart from other difficulties in this hypothesis, there were some clear cases where I got a point or even a whole subject which had only been thought and not spoken.

Of course, the personal impression of the percipient himself is by no means conclusive evidence, but I do feel there is one almost universal quality in these guesses of mine which does suit telepathy and does not suit any other explanation. They always begin with a vague emotional quality or atmosphere: "This is horrible, this is grotesque, this is full of anxiety"; or rarely, "This is something delightful"; or sometimes, "This is out of a book," "this is a Russian novel", or the like. That seems like a direct impression of some human mind. Even in the failures this feeling of atmosphere often gets through. That is, it was not so much an act of cognition, or a piece of information that was transferred to me, but rather a feeling or an emotion; and it is notable that I never had any success in guessing mere cards or numbers, or any subject that was not in some way interesting or amusing.

Let us consider what we mean by telepathy. I believe most of us in this Society are inclined to agree with Bergson that it is probably a common unnoticed phenomenon in ordinary life, especially between intimates. We all know how often two friends get the same thought at the same moment. Tolstoy, the most acute of observers, speaks of "the instinctive feeling with which one human being guesses another's thoughts, and which serves as the guiding thread of conversation."<sup>1</sup> Most teachers will agree that one of the marks of a good teacher is the degree of telepathy he can stir in his pupils. The same thought explains why a lecture or course of lectures, if good, can be more effective than the reading of a textbook, though the textbook almost always contains more information. And what about the impression people receive from the shared enjoyment of drama, poetry, music, or even, I think, some of the more imaginative branches of philosophy? Is there not some telepathy, some shared sensitivity, at work—not very different from that which a dog feels when he shares the trouble or anxiety of his master?<sup>2</sup> And shall I be wrong in suggesting that it is just in these cases that our main instrument, language, rather fails us and, like the dog, we have to appeal to something less perfectly articulate?

The point will be clearer if I take some typical examples of my own experiences, both successful and unsuccessful. I choose them from the unpublished bundles of which I spoke, which are later than Mrs Sidgwick's collection.

The method was always the same. I was sent out of the drawing-room either to the dining-room or to the end of the hall, the door or doors, of course, being shut. The others remained in the drawing-room: someone chose a subject, which was hastily written down, word for word. Then

<sup>1</sup> *Childhood and Youth*, p. 141. In another place he says of Nekhludoff that, "when a chord was struck in his mind, a chord in mine vibrated".

<sup>2</sup> This sympathy is not, I think, entirely explained by the excitation of the man's adrenalin glands which is smelt by the dog: the smell of adrenalin seems generally to irritate or annoy a dog.

I was called in, and my words written down. I may add that, out of the first 505 cases, Mrs Verrall estimated the percentage as : Success, 33 per cent. ; Partial Success, 27·9 per cent. ; Failure, 39 per cent. But it may be remarked that as evidence for the presence of some degree of telepathy most of the partial successes are quite as convincing as the complete successes : this would produce something like 60 per cent. evidential and 40 per cent. non-evidential.

First, two perfectly ordinary cases, where the emotional atmosphere is obvious and strong, and then is developed into something more definite.

*October 26 1924 (?)*.

My wife gave a subject :

M.H.M. "This is not a nice thing. What Nansen was describing the other day of the church yard at Buzuluk, where there lay the great pile of corpses, numbers of children who had fallen dead in the night."

I was summoned, and said :

G.M. "This is perfectly horrible. It's the Russian famine. It is the masses and masses of bodies carted up every night in the Church yard at . . ." (The scribe did not catch the name.)

M.H.M. "Any particular bodies?"

G.M. "Oh yes, children. I associate it with Nansen's lecture here."

Here came memory in as a help. The subject was an incident that I remembered. In the next it was an obstacle : that is, a remembered incident thrust itself in and had to be rejected before I could get the real subject. I should explain that my mother had a story that when she was at a school in France, she had been made to wear a placard labelled "*impie*".

*November 24 1929.*

MRS DAVIES. "Jane Eyre at school standing on a stool, being called a liar by Mr Brocklehurst. The school spread out below her and the Brocklehurst family 'a mass of shot purple silk pelisses and orange feathers'."

G.M. "... (I think of) my mother being at her French school, being labelled '*impie*'.... I reject that. But a sense of obloquy. Girl standing up on a form in a school, and the school there, and people coming in, and she is being held up to obloquy in some way or other.—A thing in a book certainly. I think they are calling her a liar. I get an impression of the one girl standing up and a group of people or a family coming in and denouncing her. I think it's English."

Question. "Colour of the people's dresses?"

G.M. "I can't get the colour of the people's dresses."

I take another with a very marked but extremely different atmosphere.

*January 22 1928.*

STEPHEN MURRAY. "George Rickey and me riding the motor-bike past the inhabitants of Moultsford Lunatic Asylum, and one cheery-looking man with gold spectacles on his forehead barking furiously at us, like a dog."

G.M. "A curiously confused and ridiculous scene. You and someone on a motor bicycle, and a scene of great confusion; . . . perhaps the bicycle is broken down. But there is a confused rabble and, I know it sounds ridiculous, but someone on all-fours barking like a dog." (Then after a little encouragement) "Are they lunatics by any chance?"

Then two where the atmosphere is fainter and more subtle. The first came on a bad evening after two or three failures, and I was inclined to give up.

MY DAUGHTER ROSALIND. "I think of dancing with the Head of the Dutch Foreign Office at a *café chantant* at the Hague."

G.M. "A faint impression of your journey abroad. I should say something official; sort of official soirée or dancing or something. Feel as if it was in Holland."

The second occurred on May 14 1927.

R.M. "I think of walking in the Park at Belgrade and meeting the English governess."

G.M. "I'm getting a different feeling. It's somebody who is in rather a state of mind. I should think escaped from Russia. You are meeting her in some curious country. Wait a bit! It's not anyone at Robert College or Constantinople College. It's some queer country where you seem to be alone, and you are meeting some sort of English-woman who has been driven out of Russia, and hates the place where she is. . . . Oh yes. I do remember. It's when you went out to Constantinople by the express alone, and met the English governess in the Park."

The history and "state of mind" of the English governess was correct, but had not been mentioned. I had some faint memory of the incident. The "queer country" was Serbia.

Next I will take two cases where I received a feeling or thought that had not been spoken, and was not in my memory at all.

November 17 1924.

R.M. "A scene in a book by Aksakoff, where the children are being taken to their grandparents, and the little boy sees his mother kneeling beside the sofa where his father is lying, lamenting at having to leave them."

G.M. "I should say this was Russian. I think it's a book I haven't read. Somebody's remembrance of childhood or something. A family travelling, the children, father and mother. I should think they are going across the Volga. I don't think I can get it more accurately. The children are watching their parents or seeing something about their parents. . . . I should think Aksakoff. They are going to see their grandmother."

Note. They did just afterwards have to cross the Volga, and Rosalind said she had been thinking of that, though she did not mention it.

Much more curious is the next, though at first sight it is a mere failure.

May 15 1927.

EDITH WEBSTER. "I think of the Castalian spring at Delphi and how we drank the water there."

G.M. I don't think I shall get it. But I've got a slight feeling of atmosphere, as if there were something terrible going to happen; as if it were the night before something . . . an atmosphere of suspense."

Note. R.M. commented: "I had been thinking of saying goodbye to someone who was going (to the war) to be killed, Hugo? Rupert? I got the feeling of 'This is the end'."

R.M. had not spoken. She had evidently intended or expected to give the next subject, but E.W. was asked instead.

I add another failure which is, I think, equally significant.

November 24 1929.

MARGARET DAVIES. "Medici chapel and tombs: sudden chill: absolute stillness. Marble figures who seem to have been there all night."

G.M. "I wonder if this is right . . . I've got a feeling of a scene in my *Nefrekepta*, where the man goes in, passage after passage, to the inner chamber where Nefrekepta is lying dead with the shadows of his wife and child sitting beside him . . . but I think it's Indian."

(My poem was translated from an Egyptian story; I suppose I felt the subject was not Egyptian.)

Sometimes the subject was a bit of poetry: I was then apt to answer at once without any groping or hesitation.

January 22 1928.

MARGARET COLE. "The man in Browning who is dying and sees the row of bottles at the bed, and it reminds him of where he met his girl when he was young."

G.M. (Instantly on entrance.)

"How sad and mad and bad it was,  
But oh, how it was sweet."

JOHN ALLEN. "I think of the priest walking by the shore of the sea after he had been to Agamemnon and been refused."

G.M. *Βῆ δ' ἀκέων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης*

[*Iliad*, I. 34.]

Now, granted that this curious sensitivity which we call telepathy exists, how shall we best analyse or describe it? In the first place, as far as my own experience goes, it does not quite feel like cognition or detection; it is more like the original sense of the word "sympathy", *συμπαθεία* the sharing of a feeling, or "co-sensitivity". I seem to be passive, and feel in a faint shadowy way the feeling or state of mind of someone else. Tolstoy's metaphor of the chord which vibrates when another chord is struck seems to express it.

If we follow the general lines suggested by Bergson we may suppose an original store, so to speak, of vague undifferentiated sensitivity belonging to all gregarious creatures, which is then "canalised" into particular clearer and more efficient forms as the creature develops definite sense organs. These senses again become keener and more effective as they are needed and used, but fade away if they are not used, while some remnant of the original weak uncanalised sensitivity is still there to be drawn upon.

I have tried to get some guidance from books on the intelligence of animals. But the books are unfortunately all written by human beings, who keep testing their examinees by the intelligence tests to which they themselves are accustomed—reasoning, inference, speed in learning and the like. No wonder the poor victims cut rather a miserable figure. I wonder what sort of show we should make if dogs tested us for our powers of finding our way or following a trail, or if spiders criticised our power of symmetrical web-weaving. Mr Romanes, for example, told his dog, a setter, to follow him. He then set off in Indian file, with eleven men following his footsteps, his gamekeeper, a special friend of the dog, coming last. After two hundred yards, he turned off to the right with five men, the other six going to the left. The dog was then let loose, and, by smell or otherwise, made out his master's track with eleven other footprints over it. Among many much stronger sense impressions it discerned unflinching the one that it needed, that it craved. We civilised white men are hardly at all dependent on our sense of smell or our power of following a trail, and are consequently very helpless in such matters. The Australian blacks, however, are almost as clever as dogs. "The Arunta", I read, "have extraordinary aptitudes for all that pertains to the quest of food. Their skill in following a trail is wonderful. Not only does a black know the tracks of all animals and birds, but when he has examined a burrow he can say at once from the direction of the latest tracks, or even by smelling the earth at the entrance of the burrow, whether the animal is at home or not. He will also know the footprints of all his acquaintance."<sup>1</sup>

Take again the sense of direction. A bat can find its way in the dark, flying fast this way and that among obstacles without hitting them. One bat at least still found its way when some scientific inquirer put out its eyes. Good authorities, such as Bethe and Fabre, consider that a "special sense of direction, not dependent on sight", exists in bees and wasps.<sup>2</sup> We all know how a cat or dog taken a hundred miles away in a train often finds its way back to the home it has left. There must surely be some element of the same faculty in homing pigeons. That power has fallen into disuse with civilised man. But Lapps, Finns, Eskimo and Red Indians seem to have it. I have read of a Lapp setting forth confidently over a trackless and treeless country covered with snow, to meet another Lapp who was coming to see him at a spot about 150 miles off. He knew exactly the direction in which to go, and was sure of keeping it. Even more surprising is a record quoted by Galton from the *Journal of Captain*

<sup>1</sup> Sommerfelt, *La Langue et la Société*, p. 80; based on Spencer and Giller, and Strehlow.

<sup>2</sup> Washburn, *The Animal Mind*, p. 26

*Hall*, published in 1879 by the U.S. Government. An Eskimo who had been travelling for several months, covering a distance of more than 1100 miles, was asked to draw a map to show where he had been; he drew a map of his journey stage by stage, which is described as rather more exact than the Admiralty Chart of 1870.<sup>1</sup> There are probably here also a few special sensitives among us; but on the whole the faculty has been lost by disuse. In hearing, again, the animals that are habitually hunted by beasts of prey have generally developed great acuteness of hearing, at least for the sounds that may mean danger. So have the Red Indians, who in the midst of much irrelevant noise from wind and water, will instantly detect the crack of a small twig that may mean an enemy's foot-step. One may wonder why many small animals—but not as a rule large ones—can hear the cries of a bat and other sounds which are too high for the human ear. Galton tells us how he once walked out in London with an instrument producing strong super-auditory sounds. No one took any notice except cats and small dogs, who became highly excited. Some creatures, again, are sensitive to ultra-violet lights which the human eye cannot see; and some low forms of life without eyes are nevertheless affected by light, and seem to have a vague uncanalised sensitiveness in their bodies, to such things as magnetic currents and balance. This is not, of course, telepathy, but it seems to show the reality of an undifferentiated sensitivity capable of taking different forms.

And I must say it is very difficult not to see telepathy in the action of flocks of birds and of many gregarious animals. We have all seen a flock of rooks or of field fares start suddenly and simultaneously in flight. There is a similar collective and sudden movement in migrations, though no doubt there are external reasons of date or of weather which have contributed to the joint decisions. There is a wonderful description by Kropotkin of a Siberian lake, crowds of ducks on the water and big birds of prey watching hungrily all round, but never daring to touch the flock because it all defends itself as one unit. Stampedes of cattle, buffaloes, zebras, and other gregarious animals seem to be the result of a sudden emotion sweeping through the herd, not of detailed individual obedience to an order or imitation of a leader. A panic in a human army seems to be much the same, an inrush of undefined and unexplained terror communicating itself telepathically from man to man. And surely the so-called language of animals is just this contagious emotion. When a dog invites another dog to come off after rabbits, when a bee by means of its curious dance urges another bee to fly off for honey in a particular direction, when an ant by a well-known movement of its antennae explains that its load is too heavy and that it needs help, we cannot suppose that there is any mention of rabbits or honey or loads; a cry of emotion, an expression of feeling in a particular situation is enough. The feeling is infectious and is shared. This faculty is needed by the animals just because they have no language proper; man, possessing that vastly superior means of exact communication, has not the same urgent need for this faculty, but seems to share in it to some extent.

These are only conjectures, and the conjectures of one who has little claim to any special knowledge of psychology or philosophy, or any

<sup>1</sup> Galton, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

knowledge at all of zoology. They represent merely an attempt to find a place in the coherent world that we know for these strange powers and qualities of the human mind. The points on which I speak with some conviction are, first, that telepathic communication does take place, and secondly that as far as my own experience goes it seems to me to be a communication of feeling rather than of cognition, though the cognition may follow as the feeling is interpreted. To these I add the conjecture that our ordinary everyday telepathy may be a faded and greatly intellectualised form of a sensitivity which exists much more simply and widely among many birds and gregarious animals and primitive races of men.

But there may be more than that in it. The differences between the human and non-human are very great. Our whole range of sensitivity has been so widely increased by our possession of such tools as hands and language. We cannot see like a hawk or track like a dog or hear like a hunted deer ; but we can see a Rembrandt picture and feel the thrill of a Beethoven sonata or a great poem. And surely it is noteworthy that just here our sensitivity passes beyond the realm of mere observation into that of feeling ; beyond the facts that you observe there is the sense of other things, not fully known, which have value and importance. I have already noticed that our faculty of telepathy, such as it is, seems to operate best in just those spheres where our normal instrument, language, either fails or works with difficulty. It is certain, I suppose, that there still are more things in heaven and earth than are at present mastered by science. And Bergson has reminded us that millions of men have lived for thousands of years in a world vibrating with electricity, without ever suspecting that there was such a thing. Are we not probably now in the presence and under the influence of unknown forces, forces concerned with deeper or more remote values or beauties or loyalties, which are beyond the range of our exact knowledge and power of definition, but by no means beyond the reach of an undefined but strong and even passionate feeling : "This is what I value," "This is what I love," "This is what I must obey"; or negatively, "This is what I reject." I suspect that what we call genius is a special sensitiveness in this region of art, poetry, thought and the like : a sensitiveness which according to many critics is apt to be deadened and disregarded by our all-absorbing material civilisation, and if so, is disregarded at our peril. It is in that region that our great tool, language, fails us and we have most highly developed our ancient pre-linguistic or supra-linguistic sympathy. If this is so, it may well be that William James was right in his forecast that the work of this Society may ultimately render great service to the religious gropings of the human mind.